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Ruth and Naomi

A PARAPHRASE



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By SAMUEL HATHAWAY

WORCESTER, MASS.:

F. S. BLANCHARD & CO., PUBLISHERS.

1895.

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Lieut. Samuel Hathaway,

Jan. 11, 1899

TO MY DEAR, KIND OLD MOTHER,
RUTH IN HEAVEN,
AND MY SISTER RUTH WHO HAS LATELY JOINED
HER THERE,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,
AS A
TOKEN OF THE LOVE AND GRATITUDE
OF A SON AND A BROTHER.

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THE
HATHAWAY
FAMILY

1895

THE
HATHAWAY
FAMILY

Ruth and Naomi.

A PARAPHRASE.

IN the land of Moab dwelt Naomi ;
Who, in her youth, from Bethlehem-Judah
Had come with Elimelech, her husband,
And her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion,
To 'scape the famine that ruled in that land,
And the starvation that threatened them there,
But Elimelech dying, had left her
A widow. And in time her two sons took
To them wives from the women of Moab—
The gentle Orpah and the beautiful Ruth ;
And then for ten years dwelt they united.
Then Mahlon also and Chilion died,
And the three were left widows together.
And Naomi felt the hand of the Lord
Was laid heavily upon her, and yearned
In her heart for the home of her fathers.

And she said, "Lo! I will arise and go
Unto the land of my fathers, to dwell
With the people of my blood and kindred!"
And unto her daughters she said, "Go ye
Unto thy kindred to dwell, my children,
With them: for those the Lord gave unto thee
He hath taken unto himself again!
And I, also a widow, have no more
Sons ye can wed: therefore, go ye unto
Your kindred to dwell, my children, with them,
While I depart to the land of Judah!"
Then Orpah and Ruth lifted their voices
And wept when they heard her bid them depart,
Remembering she was mother to those
To whom each had given the love of her heart,
And they said, "Nay! we will return with thee
Unto the land of thy nativity!"
But once more Naomi said unto them,
"Turn again, my daughters. and go your way,
For it grieveth me sorely, for your sakes,
That the hand of the Lord is against me!"
And they wept aloud. But Orpah, drying
Her tears, kissed her mother and went her way



RUTH'S CHOICE.

Unto the home of her fathers again.
Not so the heartfelt Ruth. She could not go.
She looked back upon the paths she had come.
And saw the flowers of love springing bright
And fresh by the way; remembered the face
Of him who had planted them there, and saw
In the smiles of the mother reflection
Of the image of him who blossomed still
In her heart, tho' touched by the frosts of death,
He, withered to dust in the grave. She said,
"O mother! entreat me not to leave thee.
I will cleave unto thee! Forbid me not—
But suffer me to follow after thee!
For whither thou goest, there will I go,
And where thou dwellest, there dwell I also!
Ever thy people my people shall be—
Thy God forever a God unto me!
For was not Mahlon a son unto thee?
Was he not more than my kindred to me?
Therefore, now only with thee will I dwell,
To love, to comfort and to cherish thee,
And to the lone evening hours of thy life
Be a loving and watchful daughter still."

“O blessed child to me!” said Naomi.
“Thou shalt dwell in my lone heart forever,
And of my kindred and friends thou shalt be
Dearest of them all! I will love and guide
And shield thee, and thou shalt sit in the shade
And sing, while I toil that thou mayst be fed!”
“No, mother,” answered Ruth, “I will not be
A burden unto thee, and sing only,
But I will bear of the labors full share!
For I am young and of fullness of strength,
And thou in the toilsome journey of life
Hast traveled long, and art weary and worn
With the burden of sorrow and of age,
And thou shouldst rest ’neath the shade of the vine,
While I of the fruits pour into thy lap!
I will go into the fields, and will bind
Into sheaves the grain the reapers have mown.
Its odors shall give my heart refreshment—
Its labors unto my sleep a repose,
And a sweetness unto my food shall come,
And a flavor the idler never knows!”
Then straightway they rose and went on their way,
And into the land of Judah they came;

And lo! they beheld it was harvest-time.
The fields were waving with the golden grain,
And the ripened corn gleamed bright in the flame
Of noon, like summer clouds at set of sun.
The reapers went forth to reap in the fields,
Like death in the harvest of men.
The maidens followed to gather and bind—
To pour into broken hearts oil and wine—
Our comforters sweet in this world of woe!
Familiar grew the scenes to Naomi,
As thro' flowery fields and grassy ways
Onward they journeyed toward Bethlehem.
And, as they drew near, Naomi beheld
That the city was moved at her coming.
Lo! out from their homes the people had come
To greet her with joy and welcome her home.
At the gates of the city they met her,
And cried "Naomi, Naomi has come!"
And she bowed her head and bitterly wept,
As the tide of memory rushed o'er her;
And thoughts of the dead, in their graves who slept,
And whose friends were now gathered before her.
Her union of love with him who was gone,

The days of her youth, her girlhood's glad hours,
When o'er these hill-tops and valleys she roamed
And gathered their beautiful fruits and flowers.
"O call me Naomi no more," she said,
"For sorely the Lord hath afflicted me;
But, Mara, whose fullness of hope hath fled,
And thus empty returneth unto thee!"
Thus amid greetings of welcome they came
To Bethlehem, home of her youth, again.
And Ruth said, "Now that the harvest is come,
Let me go to the fields of corn, to glean
After him with whom I may favor find!"
And Naomi said, "Go, my daughter!"
And the morning light and the evening shade
Found Ruth in the field still busy with toil;
And, as she gathered the grain into sheaves,
She caroled the songs of sweetness and joy.
And the reapers, as they cut their smooth way
Thro' the shining waves of the golden grain—
E'en as the keel of the ship cuts the sea—
Looked back in the fragrant paths they had made,
And smiled at her guileless simplicity;
For, lo! their labors were lightened by her,

Their sickles made keener, their arms more strong,
As their hearts in their bosoms were upborne,
Buoyed by the lightness she breathed in her song.
And Boaz, the lord of the harvest fields,
Came forth to see what the reapers had done,
And he looked upon the shears they had bound,
And the golden shocks that shone in the sun.
And behold! his eye was filled with delight
And the reapers saw how much he was pleased,
Yet not with the richness of the harvest crops,
But with the fair stranger who bound the sheaves.
Then Boaz unto his laborers said,
“The Lord bless ye and be with ye alway!
Tell me, who is this maiden fair I see,
Who in my fields comes to gather the grain?
A stranger look and foreign air she wears—
From whence came she? Whose blood is in her veins?”
“A Moabitess,” then answered they him,
“From the land of Moab of late she came.
She wedded Mahlon, son of Naomi,
Thy kindred and friend; but now he is dead,
As thou knowest, and she is left alone.
Sure thou wilt not refuse to give her bread

As recompense for toil in harvest done!"

Then Ruth entreatingly unto him said,

"My lord, suffer me in thy fields to come

To gather into sheaves the ripened grain,

And here with the reapers to share the toil,

And with the maidens share, that I may gain

Food for the need of myself and mother!

For I, a lone stranger in a strange land,

Within thy people's hearts have grateful found

Tokens warm of friendships in their sweet smiles

Of sympathy and kindly words of love."

"Bless thee!" Go thou not hence!" Boaz replied.

"But here in my fields watch the reapers reap

And the maidens bind till the harvest is o'er!

For tho' a stranger, I know thee who thou art,

And also thy mother, Naomi, I know,

For she is of my blood and my kindred.

I know that thou hast come to bless her home

And be, henceforth, unto her life a stay,

A staff and a comfort, and be unto

The people of Judah a pride and joy.

The Lord God of Israel reward thee

And be forever thy strength and thy trust,

Who from the land of thy nativity
Hath brought thee to dwell hereafter with us!"

And to his reapers and maidens he said,
"Suffer her to bind or rest as she may.
Scatter as ye pass the grain in her way.
When she is ahungered, give her to eat.
The waters of the spring give her to drink.
And be mindful and respectful alway!"

Now when the grain was all gathered and housed,
And the seed from the chaff threshed by the flail,
In the bright harvest moon gathered they then,
The olive-cheeked maidens and sun-browned men,
To joy in the bounteous harvest yield,
And the wages of toil earned in the field.
And Boaz, so blessed, was rich in his heart,
And thus at the feast drank deep of the wine.
Drank to the flower he had seen in his fields,
And who had stolen the peace of his mind.
When the feast was o'er and the guests had gone,
He laid himself down to sleep in the barn,
And in dreams kept listening to the song
To the gleaners, sung by Ruth, in the corn.
And as he slept, said Naomi to Ruth:

“I know the man and the end is not yet!
I know the vision that filleth his dreams,
And whose the image that haunteth his soul!
It is for thy welfare and comfort I look,
So, therefore, obey my instructions as told.
Seek thou, Boaz, as he sleeps, in his dreams,
And lay thee down at his feet in the barn,
And do as it shall be told unto thee
When he awakes from his slumbers so sound!”
Then Ruth went forth and found him as he slept
Alone in darkness, in silence and calm.
Beneath the folds of his mantle she crept
Softly, and lay at his feet in the barn.
Thus till near midnight his slumbers he kept,
Tho’ his feast in heaviness oppressed him,
And he felt as if the crops from his fields
Were all laid upon his limbs and his breast,
As he struggled and smothered beneath them.
And he awoke and looked ’round in affright,
As tho’ visions of horror he would flee.
And, behold! there thro’ the darkness of night,
Dimly the form of a woman saw he.
“O woman! thy name? who art thou?” he said,



RUTH AND BOAZ.

“Who on this night hath done thus unto me—
Come here to watch in the wild dreams I’ve had,
And keep angel guard and shield over me?”
“Know I am Ruth, thy kinswoman,” she said,
“Who came thus to watch and guard over thee.
I beheld thee as in slumber thou layest,
And could see that thou wast sorely oppressed,
And hoped thus to give peace and a comfort,
A joy and a solace unto thy rest!
But now I will ’rise and quickly depart,
And leave thee here to thy slumbers alone,
For there’s something in my womanly heart
That reproves me for this I have done!
Yet mark it not, I pray thee, that I came
To watch thus with thee, my kinsman, alone!
Thou wast so kind when I toiled in the field—
So bounteous in the wages thou paidst—
And filled my sad heart with gladness so full
It runneth over in gratitude’s lays;
And so I must needs come tell thee my thanks,
And give thee my dutiful prayers and praise!”
“O, go thou not hence,” then Boaz replied,
“But here until morning rest thee, I pray!

Then will I unto thy nearest of kin,
To see if that he thy ransom will pay.
And if he will not, then it shall be mine,
And joyfully I will pay it for thee;
And thine shall be mine and mine shall be thine.
Henceforth my people thy people shall be,
And thou shalt dwell in my heart and my home,
And be unto my life a solace sweet,
And unto my dreams a charm forever!"

So there rested Ruth until morning broke,
Then rose to return unto Bethlehem.

"Bring hither the veil thou wearest," he said—
Measured six measures of barley therein,
And lifted the burden on her fair head
And bade her speed to the city again.
And when Naomi beheld her, she said,
"Who art thou? what the burden thou bringest?
I know by the smile that illumines thine eye,
And by the gladness of song thou singest,
That Boaz, my kinsman, was kind to thee!
Ah! thou needst not tell me, for I can see!
'Tis the same old story over again,
Told on mountain, valley, river and sea.

That, in Eden, Adam whispered to Eve,
And that my husband repeated to me!"

And at dawn Boaz went forth on his way
To find the one who was the nearest of kin,
And e'en as he sat at rest by the gate,
One then passed, and lo! he saw it was him.
"Ho, thou! thy kinswoman Ruth, thou knowest?
Knowest she is nearest of kin to thee?
Wilt thou pay the ransom for her and hers,
Or, wilt leave Ruth and her ransom for me?"

"I know my kinswoman Ruth," he replied,
"That she is nearest of kin unto me;
But, if my inheritance I divide,
Then it will be insufficient for me!
If thou desirest her heart and her hand,
Pay thou the ransom and she shall be thine,
Unto her herds and her flocks and her land
I will all right of redemption resign!"

Then Boaz called, as his witnesses true,
From those who stood near ten elders grave,
And bade them in strictness to remember
The bargain he and the kinsman had made.
Then also he took off the shoes from his feet,

E'en as a token to bind it more strong,
For he thought of the flower of his field
And remembered well her sweetness of song.
And to the elders and people he said,
"Ye are all witnesses for me this day,
That the right of redemption I have gained
Over all that once was Elimelech's and
Mahlon's and Chilion's and Naomi's,
And, moreover, Ruth, the Moabitess,
Have I purchased for a wife unto me!"
And all the people and elders replied,
"We are witnesses! Lord, make her to be
A blessed and fruitful wife unto thee!
And like Rachel and Leah build thy house,
As they builded the house of Israel!"
Then the ransom Boaz paid in bright gold,
And the precious prize took unto his breast,
And he never forgot, even when old,
How she came to bless and solace his rest!
And a child of beauty was given to them—
The image of the mother who bore it—
And—just like grandmothers since—Naomi
Would tend and bow in worship before it!

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